

May 18, 2007, San Gabriel Valley Tribune

## Development draws fire in Diamond Bar

**By Caroline An Staff Writer**

DIAMOND BAR - Aera Energy officials and local residents clashed at a meeting Wednesday over a proposed 3,600 residential and mixed-use development. The meeting at Diamond Bar Center was about what areas an environmental study should analyze, with residents wanting to know about the effects on wildlife and open space. Aera Energy is proposing to build a maximum of 3,600 homes, with nearly 2,800 homes to be developed on 1,940 acres that could be annexed into Diamond Bar. The proposed development calls for restoring 1,600 acres that was home to cattle grazing and oil wells to open space.

More than 150 residents from Rowland Heights, Hacienda Heights, Diamond Bar and Brea became frustrated after the public comment segment ended, and they were told to submit their questions in writing or verbally to the nearby staff. Residents then began shouting "it's a public meeting."

"With 55 minutes to go, they stopped the questioning," said John Martin, a Diamond Bar resident since 1973. "The meeting was just fragmented."

David Doyle, Diamond Bar's assistant city manager, said residents with specific project questions could talk to city and Aera officials in the room.

Diamond Bar Councilman Jack Tanaka said he was surprised by the abrupt ending. "It is obvious that more town hall meetings are needed," Tanaka said, adding that he would ask Mayor Steve Tye for his input.

George Basye, Aera vice-president, said that the meeting was the first in a long process. Aera officials said they believe it was a good project and with the growing job market in southern Los Angeles and northern Orange counties, building new homes is necessary.

In the more than three decades as a Diamond Bar resident, Martin said the city has gone from "country living" to the traffic-congested community that it is today. Martin said that he trusts the City Council will act in good faith, but was skeptical of Aera's intentions. "I'm not sure they understand that this is the biggest development. There should be numerous town hall meetings," he said.

Traffic remained the No. 1 concern of residents. Mike Hughes, president of the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association, believes the project - if it moves forward - will drive long-time residents out of the area. "We should leave that area as open space," he said.

Another Diamond Bar resident, Don Sutton, said the city's Pantera Park was the location for regular deer sightings, but with more development in the area, the sightings have decreased over the year. "No matter how you look at it any development will impact the animals," he said.

A draft of the study will be completed this summer, with a final version for the Diamond Bar City Council's review by the end of the year, officials said.

**[caroline.an@sgvn.com](mailto:caroline.an@sgvn.com)**